

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SNM-02

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S E C R E T RANGOON 1854

LIMDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - T E X T (P A R A 5 L A S T 2 L I N E S)

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SNAR, BM
SUBJ: STATUS OF THAI HELICOPTER DETAINED BY BURMESE

REF: (A) BANGKOK 14008, (C) BANGKOK 13964

1. AT 1300 HOURS 28 JUNE, EMBOFFS DISCUSSED MOHEIN III
WITH COLONEL TIN OO AND ACTING DDSI COLONEL KYAW HTUN. LATTER
HAD JUST RETURNED FROM TWO-DAY ON SPOT INSPECTION TO SITE OF
DETAINED THAI HELICOPTER WHERE HE INTERVIEWED DIRECTLY LIEUTENANT
IN CHARGE OF PARU PLATOON.

2. BURMESE VERSION OF INCIDENT BASICALLY SIMILAR TO THAI.
HELICOPTERS ENTERED BURMA AT APPROXIMATELY LB 980715 AND BEGAN
TO MAKE DESCENT WHEN THEY APPARENTLY OBSERVED BURMA ARMY OFFICER,
WHO WAS IN FACT COLONEL MAUNG MAUNG COMMANDER OF THE MOHEIN III
OPERATION, INDICATING BY POINTING TO HIS UNIFORM THAT HE WAS
BURMA ARMY AND THE THAI HELICOPTER WAS OVER BURMESE SOIL. PARU-
CARRYING HELICOPTERS THEREFORE CONTINUED THEIR FLIGHT UNTIL THEY
SAW A MULE TRAIN WHICH THAIS BELIEVED WAS NARCOTICS CARAVAN AT-

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TEMPTING ESCAPE MOHEIN OPERATION. HELICOPTERS TEHEREFORE UNLOADED
THE PARU NEAR KUANG MAI HUNG (LB9478), APPROXIMATELY EIGHT
IKLOMETERS INSIDE BURMA. PACK CARAVAN WAS IN FACT BURMA
ARMY SUPPLY COLUMN WHICH SURROUNDED AND DISARMED THAIS AND
SUBSEQUENTLY DETAINED HELICOPTER. ONLY POINT OF DIFFERENCE
WITH THAI VERSION, OTHER THAN ESTIMATED LOCATION, IS THAT
BURMESE STATE EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH HIGH-LEVEL BORDER CONTACTS

INITIATED BY THAIS RATHER THAN BURMESE.

3. LT. COL. KYAW HTUN INTERVIEW WITH PARU LIEUTENANT INDICATED HE GIVEN FOUR INSTRUCTIONS BY BPP GENERAL WICHAI WICHAITHANAPHAT:

A. WHEN TRAFFICKERS ARE OBSERVED ENTERING THAILAND THE PARU ARE TO STOP AND MAKE THEM SURRENDER IN ACCORDANCE WITH THAI LAW.

B. IF THE TRAFFICKERS RESIST PARU ARE AUTHORIZED TO FIGHT AND CALL FOR REINFORCEMENTS IF NEEDED.

C. IF BURMA ARMY INTRUDES INTO THAILAND THE PARU ARE TO NEGOTIATE BECAUSE THE BURME ARMY IS OPERATING AGAINST NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS. IF ANY PROBLEMS ARISE PARU ARE TO SEEK FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS.

D. WHILE ON THIS DUTY IT IS BEST TO AVOID FIGHTING.

4. DISCOVERY OF TWO HELIPADS AT TRAFFICKER CAMP IN THE AREA IS SOURCE OF CURRENT PROBLEM. TIN OO NOTED THAT BURMA ARMY HAS RECEIVED REPORTS OVER LONG PERIOD OF TIME OF WHITE HELICOPTERS FLYING FROM THAILAND INTO AREA OF BURMA CONTROLLED BY TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS. WHILE TIN OO ACCEPTS THAT PARU FROM HUA HIN NOT LINKED WITH TRAFFICKERS, DISCOVERY OF HELIPADS AND ARRIVAL OF A WHITE HELICOPTER TRIGGERED TRADITIONAL BURMESE SUSPICIONS OF POLICE HELICOPTER CREWS AND DEMANDED, IN BURMESE EYES, FURTHER INVESTIGATION.

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5. EMBOFFS STRESSED TO BURMESE THAT ALL INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US CONFIRMS THAT THAI HELICOPTER INTRUSION WAS INADVERTENT PART OF LEGITIMATE THAI EFFORT TO SUPPORT BURMESE OPERATIONS. WE NOTED THAT BURMESE EFFORT HAD ACHIEVED CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS IN DISRUPTING NARCOTICS ORGANIZATIONS IN BURMA, SEIZING NARCOTICS AND REFINING EQUIPMENT AND FORCING SUA TO MOVE ITS NARCOTICS STOCKPILE INTO THAILAND. WE NOTED ALSO THAT THAI HAD BEEN MAKING PROGRESS TOWARD LOCATING AND SEIZING THIS IMPORTANT NARCOTICS CACHE WHEN HELICOPTER INCIDENT CAUSED GNERAL STANDDOWN, AND THAT CONTINUATION OF THE OPERATION ON THE THAI SIDE IS BEING HELD IN ABEYANCE PENDING RELEASE OF THE HELICOPTER AND PARU. AS LONG AS STALEMATE CONTINUES (WE POINTED OUT) ONLY THOSE CONNECTED WITH THE TRAFFICKING ACTIVITY WILL PROFIT. WE URGED THE EARLIEST RELEASE OF THE HELICOPTER AND PARU SO THAT THE OPERATION MAY CONTINUE AS ORIGINALLY PLANNED.

6. TIN OO PROMISED TO INFORM EMBASSY AS SOON AS HE HAS REPORTED TO HIGHER AUTHORITY.

7. DISCUSSION ALSO COVERED POSSIBLE FUTURE NARCOTICS OPERATIONS WHICH INDICATED PRESENT UNFORTUNATE CONTRETEMPS

HAS NOT DEFLECTED BURMESE INTENTION TO CONTINUE EFFORT
AGAINST TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTALLATIONS.
OSBORN

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